ARMED FORCES MEDICAL LIBRARY

# NEWS

VOL. X, No. 9 SEPTEMBER 1955

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MEDICAL LIBRARY

## PLANNING FUNDS OBTAINED

Appropriation of $350,000 for plans for a new Armed Forces Medical Library building is contained in Public Law 219, 84th Congress, signed by the President on 4 August 1955.

## ANNUAL MEETING, FRIENDS OF THE AFML

The Friends of the Armed Forces Medical Library will hold its annual dinner meeting at the Commissioned Officers' Mess (Open), National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda, Maryland, on Friday evening, 28 October 1955. The social hour will begin at 6:30 p.m., with dinner following at 7:30. Mr. Keyes D. Metcalf, Librarian-emeritus of Harvard University, will speak on "Research Libraries in 1955."

## ADVISORY GROUP

The Armed Forces Medical Library Advisory Group has been reconstituted with three new members to replace Miss Janet Doe, Dr. Karl F. Meyer, and General H. H. Twitchell, whose terms expired 30 June 1955. A new Army representative was appointed in April 1955 to complete the unexpired term of Colonel Thair C. Rich, who has left Washington on a new assignment. The membership is now as follows:

**Term expiring 30 June 1956**

Austin Smith, M. D.
Editor, Journal of the American Medical Association

Colonel William S. Moore, MC
Office of The Surgeon General, U. S. Army

Printing cost borne by the FRIENDS of the Armed Forces Medical Library.

Term expiring 30 June 1957

Saul Jarcho, M. D.
Physician, New York City

Robert M. Stephan, D.D.S.
National Institute of Dental Research, USPHS

Captain William L. Engelman, MC, USN
Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, U. S. Navy

Term expiring 30 June 1958

Worth B. Daniels, M. D.
Clinical Professor of Medicine, Geo. Washington University

Mary Louise Marshall
Professor of Bibliography, Tulane University, and
Librarian, Rudolph Matas Medical Library

Colonel Russell S. Leone, USAF (MC)
Office of The Surgeon General, U. S. Air Force

The first meeting of the AFML Advisory Group for Fiscal Year 1956 will be held at the Library on Friday, 28 October 1955.

## THE JOHN SHAW BILLINGS EXHIBIT

The first of a series of semi-permanent exhibits to be displayed in the new Exhibit Room of the Armed Forces Medical Library is, appropriately, one portraying the life and work of the Library's principal founder, Dr. John Shaw Billings, 1838-1913. As Surgeon, U. S. Army, and Librarian, Surgeon-General's Office, he was "the best known and most highly honored American physician of his time after Weir Mitchell" (Garrison).

Notable among the many interesting items pertaining to his life of vigorous public service is a series of documents portraying the early stages of the development of the first printing of the monumental medical bibliography for which he is famous: the Index-Catalogue of the Library of the Surgeon-General's Office. Material depicting the special duties assigned to Dr. Billings reflects his other talents and his varied scientific interests, and shows that he was an able surgeon in wartime, an authority on sanitary engineering, preventive medicine, statistics, and hospital design and construction.

Examples of answers to reference questions, requests for bibliographies, and a copy of the National Medical Dictionary published in 1890 portray Billings' accomplishments as librarian, bibliographer, and lexicographer. A section displaying portraits of famous friends of Billings includes portraits of Virchow, Lister, His, Trudeau, and Osler.

## DIRECTOR WILL ATTEND CONGRESS

Lieutenant Colonel Frank B. Rogers will depart from Washington on 7 September to attend the International Congress of Libraries and Documentation Centers to be held at Brussels, 10-18 September. Miss Eleanor R. Hasting, Head of the Processing Section of the Catalog Division, also will be attending the Congress as a representative of the American Library Association.

Colonel Rogers will speak at a meeting of the Medical Section of the Library Association in London on 20 September and expects to return to his desk in Washington on 26 September 1955.

## BINDING PROGRAM AT HMD

Thirteen years ago the Armed Forces Medical Library moved its oldest and most valuable books out of Washington and into the Allen Memorial Library Building near the Western Reserve University campus in Cleveland. The books themselves presented a very sorry appearance at that time; having been crowded together for over fifty years in unsuitable quarters, with dust, dirt, dry heat, humidity, insects, and various other forms of neglect taking a heavy toll, the volumes were in every state of disrepair, soiled both inside and out, with many covers warped and split, backs broken, leather cracked and sometimes even pulverized, countless pages loose and torn. Obviously, something had to be done, and quickly, or a priceless collection would soon be past restoration.

Colonel Harold W. Jones, then Librarian, took immediate steps to institute a suitable restoration program. It was agreed that since the books were to serve a research library and were not to be treasured as museum pieces only, every effort would be made to put each volume into a state where it could be easily and safely handled. All procedures were carefully planned and discussed with qualified and discriminating experts before work was begun. Not all books, no matter what their condition, are deserving of the same type of binding or of the same degree of attention; therefore certain limiting principles were laid down, such as that all

eighteenth century books, save only the most valuable few, were to be sent to a commercial bindery, to be rebound in buckram.

The Library was extremely fortunate in procuring the services of Mr. Jean C. Eschmann to carry out the restoration program. Mr. Eschmann, a native of Switzerland, was trained in his profession at the Arts and Crafts School in Zurich. In 1931 he was recognized as a Master Craftsman by the Society of Arts and Crafts, in Boston; his work has received medals and citations both here and abroad. He brought to his exacting task not only the mature skill imparted by long years of practice, but also the sense of artistry that no amount of training can bestow.

Hand bookbinding is a painstaking task, and each volume must be treated as if it had a personality of its own. Another difficulity is that while modern books are square-cut, making the fitting of endpapers and boards a relatively simple matter, books of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were not trimmed on any such accurate lines, and are usually out of square, making it necessary that every piece of material applied be hand-cut.

Mr. Eschmann and his co-workers moved ahead with their enormous task; by this summer the job was largely completed, and the Binding Section of the History of Medicine Division was terminated, according to plan (AFML NEWS, July 1955).

Row after row of handsome and thoroughly utilitarian volumes now stand on the shelves of the History of Medicine Division as a monument to the work of the Binding Section. Altogether, 9,717 volumes were restored to usefulness and beauty, at an average cost of $18.35 per volume. To those who may feel that the cost of the restoration program has been great, it may be said that except for such a program a collection whose value no one has dared to estimate would have passed beyond use. To those who saw these books in the earlier state of disrepair, and see them now, the change is almost unbelievable.

## SLAVIC BIBLIOGRAPHY AVAILABLE

Slavic Medical Bibliographies, 1945-54, compiled by Mr. Stanley Jablonski of the Index Division, Armed Forces Medical Library, has now been received from the printer; copies are available to interested libraries on request to the Director, Armed Forces Medical Library.

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